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ABSTRACT

In 2003, Congress is scheduled to reauthorize Head Start, a federal-to-local grant program for the provision of early childhood education, comprehensive services, and family support to poor preschool children and their families. The second of a series of analyses of Head Start Program Information Report data, this policy brief provides a portrait of Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs in the 2001-2002 program year. Findings reported include the following: (1) the vast majority of Head Start children were from families with earnings at or below the federal poverty level; (2) 68 percent of Head Start families have working parents, with only about one-fifth receiving welfare cash assistance and with many children needing full-day, full-year child care; (3) about half of the children identified as needing full-day, full-year care received such services through Head Start programs, while others also participated in other types of care arrangements; (4) most Head Start families do not include a parent with more than a high school education, and only a small proportion of families had one or both parents enrolled in an education or training program; (5) Head Start children and families access a variety of support services through direct provision or referrals; and (6) the proportion of Head Start teachers who have at least an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field grew to 51 percent in 2002—Head Start teacher salaries increase (though modestly) as teacher education levels increase. (Author/HTH)

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What's New in 2002? A Snapshot of Head Start Children, Families, Teachers, and Programs. Head Start Series, CLASP Policy Brief No. 2.

Rachel Schumacher and Kate Irish

Center for Law and Social Policy
Washington, DC

May 2003

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POLICY BRIEF

Head Start Series

What's New in 2002?

A Snapshot of Head Start Children, Families, Teachers, and Programs

By Rachel Schumacher and Kate Irish

This year, Congress is scheduled to reauthorize Head Start, a federal-to-local grant program for the provision of early childhood education, comprehensive services, and family support to poor preschool children and their families. New federal data on Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs provide insights into what services the program provided and whom it served in 2002. The data are from Program Information Reports (PIR) submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by all Head Start programs.[1]

This policy brief describes the picture for Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs in the 2001–2002 program year, highlighting new data never gathered before for the PIR. In March 2003, CLASP released an analysis of data for 2001, identifying key trends since the program was last reauthorized in 1998. The 2002 data confirm these trends, as well as provide new information about Head Start:

- The vast majority of Head Start children were in families with earnings at or below the federal poverty level (74 percent) or who were receiving public assistance (19 percent) at enrollment. In 2002, the poverty guideline for a family of four was $18,100.
- The great majority (68 percent) of Head Start families have working parents, with only about one-fifth in receipt of welfare cash assistance (21 percent) and with many children (45 percent) needing full-day, full-year child care.
- About half of the children (52 percent) identified as needing full-day, full-year care received such services through Head Start programs, while others also participated in other types of care arrangements.
- Most Head Start families (78 percent) do not include a parent with more than a high school education, and only a small proportion of families (11 percent) had one or both parents enrolled in an education or training program.
- Head Start helps children and families access a variety of support services through direct provision or referrals. In 2002, the family services most often received by Head Start families were parent education (32 percent), health education (27 percent), and adult education, job training, and English as a Second Language training (23 percent).
- The proportion of Head Start teachers who have at least an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field grew to 51 percent in 2002, meeting a Congressional mandate that half of teachers in center-based programs reach this goal by September 2003. Head Start teacher salaries increase (though modestly) as teacher education levels increase.

About the Authors

Rachel Schumacher is a Senior Policy Analyst and Kate Irish is a Research Assistant at the Center for Law and Social Policy.

Joan Lombardi serves as an advisor to this project.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This policy brief is the second of a series of analyses of Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data by CLASP. The next brief will look at the Early Head Start population of infants and toddlers and their families. This policy brief was made possible by a grant from the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation.

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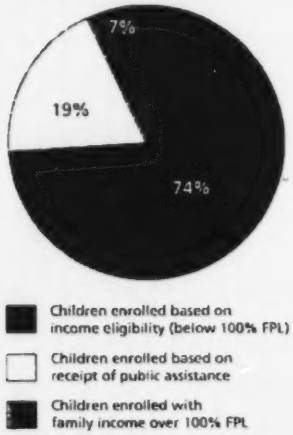
Head Start Children

The 2002 Head Start PIR data include information on all children served over the course of the program year, including preschool children between the ages of three and five, as well as pregnant women and children from birth to age three served in Early Head Start and Migrant Head Start programs. In 2002, 1,002,891 children and 7,710 pregnant women received Head Start early education and services.[2] The vast majority were served through federal funds, with just 4 percent of Head Start's funded enrollment provided by non-federal sources. The total number of children served in 2002 was about 5 percent greater than for 2001, but the proportions in each age group remained similar—93 percent were preschool age (three, four, and five years old) and 7 percent were infants and toddlers (birth through age two). Just under one-third of the children (29 percent) were participating in the program for their second or third year. Over the course of the 2002 program year, 17 percent of the children left the program, but 81 percent of those children were replaced that year.

FIGURE 1

Head Start Children Enrolled by Type of Family Eligibility, Program Year 2002


7%
19%
74%
Children enrolled based on income eligibility (below 100% FPL)
Children enrolled based on receipt of public assistance
Children enrolled with family income over 100% FPL

Note: FPL = Federal Poverty Level

The Head Start child population remained quite diverse, with 32 percent black or African American, 30 percent Hispanic or Latino, 28 percent white, 3 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2 percent Asian, and 1 percent Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. In addition, the 2002 data included a new category of Bi-racial or Multi-racial, which accounted for 3 percent. The primary language for 74 percent of the children was English and for 22 percent was Spanish. In 2002, the PIR collected for the first time information on languages other than English and Spanish: Middle Eastern and Indic, Far Eastern Asian, and Pacific Islander languages were each the primary language for 1 percent of the population, while other languages all fell below 1 percent.

For the first time, 2002 PIR data included information on the qualifying factor for Head Start child enrollment.[3] At least 90 percent of enrolled families must be low-income, defined as those families with income at or below federal poverty guidelines; families receiving public assistance; or children in foster care. Once enrolled, children remain eligible through the end of the succeeding program year. In 2002, the poverty guideline for a family of four was $18,100. In 2002, the vast majority of Head Start children were in families with earnings at or below the federal poverty level (74 percent) or who were receiving public assistance (19 percent) at enrollment (see Figure 1).

In 2002, 45 percent of Head Start children were in need of full-day, full-year child care services due to their parents' schedules at the time of enrollment.[4] Of those children in need of full-day, full-year services, 52 percent received such services through Head Start. Head Start children in need of full-day, full-year care received care in other settings as well—31 percent received child care through a relative or unrelated adult in a home-based setting, 19 percent through a child care center, 7 percent through a family child care home, and 4 percent through a public school pre-kindergarten program (see Figure 2 on page 3). And, in 2002, 10 percent of all Head Start children were also receiving a child care subsidy for child care services either through Head Start or a child care provider partner.

Head Start Program Performance Standards require that children be screened for developmental, sensory, and behavioral concerns within 45 calendar days of enrollment.[5] In 2002, 86 percent[6] of the children received medical screenings, 24 percent of screened children were assessed as needing treatment, and 89 percent of that group received follow-up medical treatment. Of the 185,013 children who received treatment, 26 percent received treatment for asthma, 21 percent for being overweight, 17 percent for anemia, 14 percent for vision problems, and 11 percent for hearing difficulties. Seventy-eight percent of Head Start children[7] received a dental exam, 29 percent of examined children were diag-

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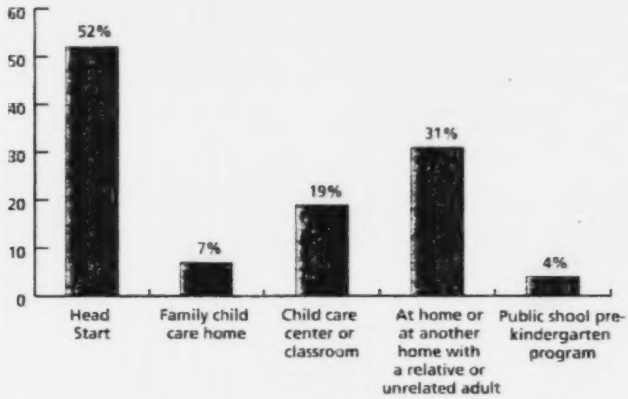
FIGURE 2

The Care Arrangements of Head Start Children Who Need Full-day, Full-year Care, Program Year 2002



Note: The percentages add up to more than 100 percent because children may have been in more than one care arrangement.

FIGURE 3

Head Start Disability Determination and Special Services, Program Year 2002

Children determined to have a disability	126,555
Percentage with a disability out of all Head Start children	13%
Children who received special services, of those determined to have a disability	93%
Services for children ages 0-3 provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C)	6%
Services provided for preschool age children through Head Start	94%
Most significant disability that preschool children received services for:*	
Speech or language impairments	65%
Non-categorical/developmental delay	20%
Health impairment	4%
Emotional/behavioral disorder	4%
Multiple disabilities including deaf-blind	3%
Learning disabilities	2%

** Disabilities that accounted for 1% or less were not included in this chart.*

nosed as needing treatment, and 76 percent of that group received treatment. In addition, 77 percent of the children who were examined received preventative dental care. Head Start agencies reported that while 85 percent of children had a source of continuous, accessible medical care, only 74 percent had a similar source for dental care. Most children (93 percent) had received all immunizations possible.[8] A lower percentage of children were referred to mental health services in 2002 (2 percent) than in 2001 (5 percent), and 74 percent of those children referred in 2002 received treatment.

In 2002, 13 percent of Head Start children were diagnosed as having a disability, and 93 percent of those who were diagnosed received special services (see Figure 3). The most common service provided to preschool children was for speech or language impairment (65 percent), and the second most common was for non-categorical /developmental delays (20 percent).[9]

Most Head Start children (87 percent) were enrolled in health insurance plans in 2002, most commonly through Medicaid or the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program (53 percent), private insurance (15 percent), a state Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (8 percent), or a combined Medicaid/CHIP program (8 percent).

Head Start Families

Head Start families most often are low income and working, with minimum levels of education. In 2002, 68 percent of Head Start families had one or both parents

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working, while in 25 percent the parent(s) were unemployed (see Figure 4). In the great majority of Head Start families (78 percent), neither parent has more than a high school degree or general equivalency degree (GED) (see Figure 5). However, only 11 percent of Head Start families had one or both parents in education or job training programs in 2002. Information collected in 2002 indicated that 56 percent of Head Start families were headed by a single parent or caregiver. Only 21 percent of families received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), down from 45 percent in 1997.

In 2002, 81 percent of families had formal family partnership agreements, which describe family goals and strategies for achieving them. Head Start programs coordinate with other agencies to support parents in accomplishing their goals.[10] Head Start programs help the children and families they serve access a variety of support services, either through direct provision, linkages, or referrals. In 2002, the services that the PIR survey found were most often received by Head Start families included: parent education (32 percent), health education (27 percent), and adult education, job training, and English as a Second Language training (23 percent) (see Figure 6 on page 5).

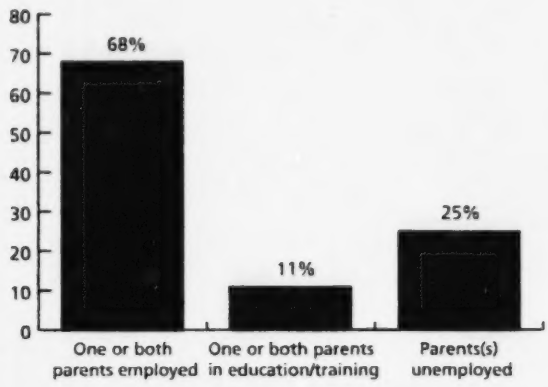
In addition, many of the program volunteers (65 percent) and staff (27 percent) were current or former Head Start parents.

Head Start Teachers and Programs

In 2002, Head Start teachers continued a trend in improved education qualifications seen in 2001. Among the 51,681 teachers in Head Start, 51 percent had an associate's degree or better—meeting a Congressional mandate that 50 percent of teachers in center-based programs attain an associate's degree or higher, with a specialization in early childhood education or a related field, by September 2003. Among non-degreed teachers, 45 percent are enrolled in an early childhood education or related degree program. For the first time, 2002 PIR data indicated the average salary for Head Start teachers according to their highest level of education (see Figure 7 on page 5); teachers with higher levels of education tended to have somewhat higher salaries, with the average salary for teachers with bachelor's degrees at $25,090. To place this in context, public school teachers with bachelor's degrees have average salaries of $43,250 and average beginning salaries of $28,986.[11]

FIGURE 4

Employment Status of Head Start Families, Program Year 2002



Note: Figures add up to more than 100 percent because parents may combine work and education/training.

FIGURE 5

Highest Level of Education Obtained by Head Start Parents, Program Year 2002

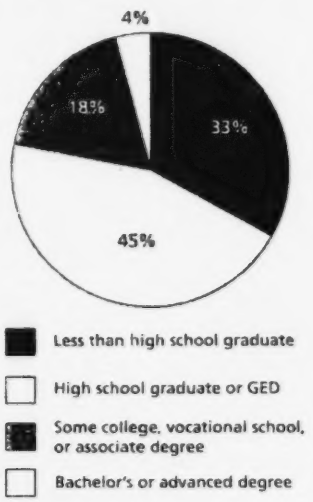


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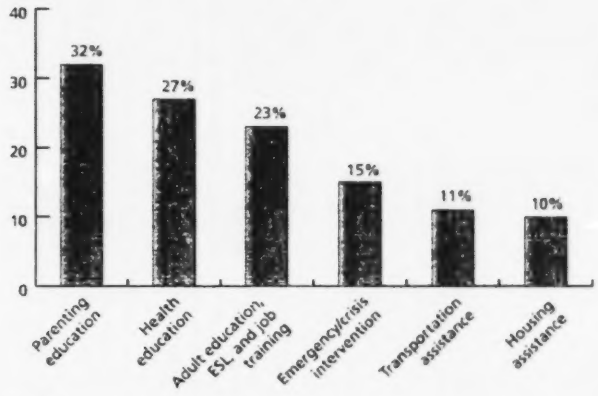
FIGURE 6

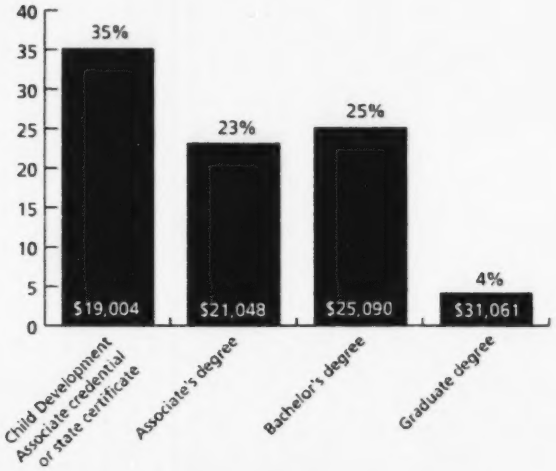
Family Services Most Often Received by Head Start Families, Program Year 2002



Note: ESL = English as a Second Language

FIGURE 7

Head Start Teacher Education Qualifications and Average Salaries, Program Year 2002



Note: Degrees are in early childhood education or a related field.

Eleven percent of Head Start teachers left and were replaced in 2002.

In 2002, the PIR collected new data on the backgrounds of Head Start staff. For example, the ethnic and racial background of child development staff who worked directly with Head Start children roughly reflected the diversity of the children served, with 37 percent of child development staff being white, 29 percent black or African American, 24 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3 percent American Indian or Native Alaskan, 2 percent Asian, 1 percent bi-racial or multi-racial, 1 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and the remaining other or unspecified (see Figure 8 on page 6). In addition, 28 percent of Head Start staff were proficient in a language other than English in 2002, which is comparable to the percent of Head Start children who spoke a primary language other than English.[12]

Based on community needs assessments, Head Start programs choose whether to offer services for children in center-based settings, in home-based settings (working directly with children and parents in the home), or by combining a mix of both approaches.[13] Some programs also work with family child care homes to deliver Head Start services. In 2002, most Head Start services (91 percent) were available in center-based programs, with 66 percent of all opportunities for enrollment in centers for five days a week.[14] And, most of the five-day-a-week center-based programs offered services for six hours or more a day (67 percent). Another 25 percent of all Head Start slots were in center-based programs operating four days a week. The remaining services were offered at

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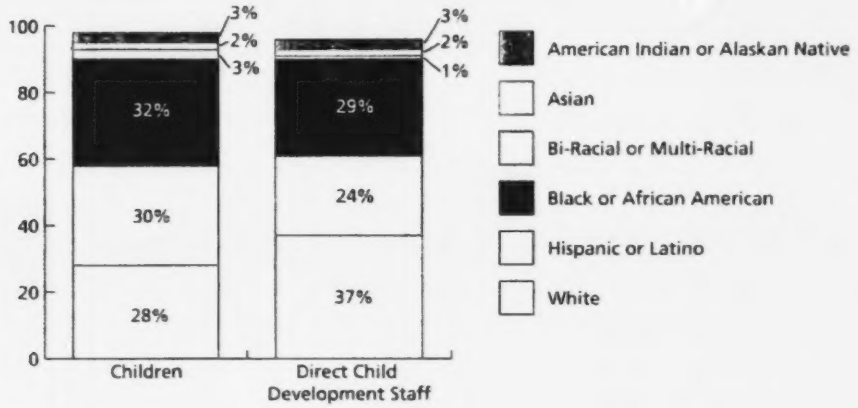
FIGURE 8

Race/Ethnicity of Head Start Children and Direct Child Development Staff, Program Year 2002



home-based (5 percent), combination (2 percent), or locally designed (2 percent) service models, and a small number through family child care homes (1 percent).

Head Start programs are in diverse auspices, including 39 percent in private, non-profit agencies, 31 percent in community action agencies, 17 percent in public or private school systems, 6 percent in government agencies, 6 percent in Tribal or Alaskan Native government, and 1 percent in private, for-profit agencies. For the first time, 2002 PIR data reported what proportion of Head Start agencies were religiously affiliated—5 percent.

Head Start agencies often work in partnerships with other community entities. Head Start agencies had formal agreements with 8,082 school districts to coordinate transition services for children and families in 2002, which represent 58 percent of the school districts in Head Start service areas. In 2002, 10 percent of classes in center-based Head Start programs were operated by a child care center partner. Head Start programs worked with 2,692 family child care homes to provide Head Start services in home-based settings.

Head Start programs may choose which screening, curriculum, and ongoing assessment tools to use. Programs are required to screen children within 45 days of child enrollment to identify any problems regarding children's development, including developmental, sensory, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills, in a manner sensitive to children's cultural backgrounds.[15] In 2002, programs reported that 84 percent of children were screened, with 15 percent of those children determined to need follow-up.

A majority of programs used a nationally recognized curriculum, most often Creative Curriculum or High Scope, in 2002. Approximately 5 percent opted to design their curricula locally.

Most programs chose from available ongoing assessment tools to determine how children are doing and how to improve services and practices. Less than 30 percent designed assessment tools locally.

Conclusion

The 2002 PIR data confirm that Head Start serves a diverse population of low-income children and families. Most of these families are working poor, with minimum education levels. These children and families receive a variety of family support and comprehensive services through Head Start and through coordination with available services in their communities. The 2002 PIR data provide helpful contextual information as the reauthorization of Head Start moves forward.

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Endnotes

1 Data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau, Head Start Program Information Reports, 2001-2002. These data are for the Head Start program years running from September to August, not for the federal fiscal years of October to September. Therefore, they may differ from calculations posted by the Head Start Bureau in the annual Head Start Statistics Fact Sheet. This brief includes only a subset of the PIR data; for more details please visit the CLASP website at http://www.clasp.org.

2 The PIR collects data on all children and pregnant women who participated in the program at any point in the year, including those who may not have completed the year, and so this figure is not simply the number of funded slots in the program. Note that the 2002 PIR data collected information on the number of pregnant women for the first time.

3 Prior to 2002, the PIR collected data on family income levels. In 2001, the median family income level was between $9,000 and $11,999 annually, well below $17,650, the 2001 poverty guideline for a family of four.

4 Prior to 2002, the PIR collected data on child care needs based on family unit, not individual children. In 2001, 49 percent of families needed full-day, full-year services.

5 Head Start Performance Standards. 45 CFR 1304.20 (b)(1). CLASP's calculations of the percentages of children who received medical screenings, dental exams, and immunizations or were referred to mental health specialists may slightly under-represent the percentage of children who received these services because there is no way to adjust the figures to exclude those children who dropped out of Head Start within 45 calendar days.

6 Note that this number includes children who left the program in the first 45 days of enrollment (5 percent), possibly prior to the day the program screened children.

7 The data on dental exams are only collected for three- to five-years-olds; different data regarding dental health are collected for infants and toddlers.

8 Children who have all the immunizations allowable at a certain point are those who are not on the schedule recommended for their age group but have been brought up to date to the maximum extent they can be given a late start on their immunization schedule.

9 Data on disabilities services are only collected for preschool children, ages three to five.

10 Head Start Performance Standards, 45 CFR 1304.40(a)(1) and (2).

11 American Federation of Teachers. *Annual Survey of State Departments of Education*. Table III-1: Actual Average Beginning BA Teacher Salaries, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 12, 2003, from http://www.aft.org/research/survey01/tables/tableIII-1.html.

12 No further information is available on exactly what other languages besides English Head Start staff speak.

13 Head Start Performance Standards, 45 CFR 1306.31.

14 These figures are based on funded enrollment, meaning the number of children that grantees are funded to serve in a program year, rather than on actual child enrollment, which includes all the children who are served in a year, even when more than one child is served in a slot due to turnover. Also, the PIR data on program types offered do not indicate whether these program options were full-year—that is, operating during school vacation periods and the summer months.

15 Head Start Performance Standards, 45 CFR 1304.20(b)(1).

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CLASP POLICY BRIEF

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

Head Start Series

ABOUT CLASP

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), a national nonprofit organization founded in 1968, conducts research, legal and policy analysis, technical assistance, and advocacy related to economic security for low-income families with children.

CLASP's child care and early education work focuses on promoting policies that support both child development and the needs of low-income working parents and on expanding the availability of resources for child care and early education initiatives. CLASP examines the impact of welfare reform on child care needs; studies the relationships between child care subsidy systems, the Head Start Program, pre-kindergarten efforts, and other early e[illegible]tion initiatives; and e[illegible]es how these systems can be responsive to the developmental needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

CLASP POLICY BRIEF
Head Start Series, No. 2

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